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REMARKS

UPON A

SERMON

Preach'd by

Dr. HENRY SACHEVERELL,

AT THE

Affizes held at DERBY,

Aug. 15. 1709.

In a Letter to Himself.

Containing a just and modest Defence of the SOCIETIES for REFORMATION OF MANNERS,

Against the Aspersions cast upon them in that Sermon.

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REMARKS

UPON A

SERMON

Preach'd by

Dr. Henry Sacheverell, &c.

Reverend Sir,

IT is not, you may assure yourself, from any pleasure I take in Wrangling or Contention, that I offer any thing here against your Sermon: but when a Design that evidently tends to promote the Honour of GOD, and to put a stop to the Profaneness and Immoralities of Mankind, has been attack'd with so much Passion and ill Language; and when the whole Body of those that are concern'd therein, as well as their Proceedings, have been so scurrilously used, and falsely represented, the Regard

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I owe to *Piety* and *Justice* cannot but engage me in their Vindication. Yet Charity puts me in mind to do it without Heat and Violence, *not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing*, (1 Pet. iii. 9.) With whatever Bitterness or Indecency therefore you have treated these Societies, it shall be *my* Care to defend them with Calmness and Good Manners; in which I shall but follow their Example, who have certainly shewn a great deal of Good-nature in delaying to answer to a Provocation given them above a Year and a half ago: a Meekness in their Conduct which shews how well they have learned to imitate their Suffering Master, and how far they are from that Spiritual Pride which *you* have most censoriously and unjustly charged upon them.

I am willing to suppose your Aversion to those that set themselves to bring Immorality and Vice to Punishment proceeds from your being unacquainted with them; from a Misapprehension of the Measures they really take; from your not enquiring into, or not considering the Reasons upon which they ground them; and from the Calumnies and Slanders cast upon them by prejudiced and wicked

wicked Persons, who have had the Advantage of being too easily believ'd. For tho', generally speaking, such as these, *whose own Vices* have render'd them justly obnoxious to the Laws, are the hottest Enemies of such as would put those Laws in Execution, (and who can wonder if they be?) yet I am inclined to hope better things of *You*. I will throw no Dirt upon your Character, tho' it has been differently given: You are a Stranger to *me*, and I will presume on the charitable side. But when I consider the necessity there is for the most vigorous Attempts of Reformation amongst us; when I consider the gross and flagrant Enormities that abound so scandalously in the Kingdom; such Multitudes that profess themselves to be *Christians*, using (not only without Fear or Shame, but even with *Ostentation*, as an Ornament of Speech) the most horrid *Oaths* and *Curses*, imprecating Damnation upon themselves and others; *Drunkennes* passing amongst them for Good Humour, and *Lewdness* for an Accomplishment; *Publick Houses* in all Parts of the Nation becoming Nests of *profligate* or *disorderly* Persons, or *common Stews* for the Practice of Lust and Debau-

Debauchery; *Sodomites* (who have been but rarely heard of here till the last Age,) so shamefully increased in Confidence and Numbers, as to have their appointed Places for acting their abominable Villanies, in Defiance both of GOD and Nature; Herds of *Lewd Women* continually solliciting in the open Streets; the *Lord's Day profaned* in the most impudent manner, by Mens following their Trades and ordinary Callings thereupon, without Reserve; or spending it in Gaming, Tipling, and Excess; and our Country in manifest Danger by these Crimes of falling under the Vengeance of a provoked Almighty Arm.

—When I consider, how inconsistent it is with that Loyalty we owe to GOD, the Charity that is due to our Neighbour, (to prevent, if possible, his Destruction,) and the generous Concern we ought to have for the Public Peace and Happiness (that we may ward off those Judgments which our Sins so loudly call for,) to sit still and see and hear all this without Endeavouring to put a Stop to it by furthering the Execution of the known Laws of the Land against such Practices.—

When I consider the happy Effects that may reasonably be expected of such

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Endeavours, in restraining Men from an idle, drunken, and extravagant Course of Life, rescuing them and their Families thereby from Beggary and Ruin, and preserving them from Sacrificing their Reason to the beastly pleasures of Excess; the reducing Public Houses from being Receptacles of ill Men, and Scenes of Vice and Disorder, to their legal and proper use; the removing, as much as may be, out of the way the greatest Temptations to those Sins which Custom or Natural Propensity most incline Men to; the bringing Men to a due and solemn observation of the Lord's Day and Public Fasts; Good Men being able to walk the Streets and appear in Company without being fired upon on every side with Volleys of Blasphemy and Profaneness; Religion freed from that Contempt into which the Profane and Vicious, encouraged by a long Impunity and general Countenance, have brought it; their wicked Combinations broken; their Contagious Examples taken out of Public View; themselves brought to a Regard to sacred Things, and to some good Degrees of Consideration, which may, in time, by the Blessing of GOD, have yet a more compleat and happier Influence upon them; and lastly, Na-
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tional Sins, that bring down National Judgments, curb'd by the Authority of Laws, and the Christian Profession supported in (at least) that outward Decorum that may preserve it from being any longer scandalous to a sober Infidel. — When I consider also how directly the Endeavours of our Societies tend to all the abovemention'd blessed Consequences of putting the Laws in execution against Vice, and what Success they have actually had in those Endeavours, wherever they have been pursued with Vigour, and faithfully encouraged; (for how bad soever our Case is, with respect to Piety and Virtue, it is apparently far better than when this noble Opposition to Wickedness first began;) I say, reflecting upon all these things, I cannot but be exceedingly surprized to find the Societies for Reformation used in such a manner as your *Derby-Sermon* treats them. I am surprized to find *an Ambassador of CHRIST*, whose very Business and Instructions are to promote the Kingdom and forward the Designs of his Holy Master, viz. the Prevalence of Piety and Virtue in the World; and to destroy, as much as in him lies, the Kingdom of the Devil, which consists in the abounding Wickedness of Men;

Men; — to find such an one, *in a Public Audience*, declaiming against the most effectual Methods for the suppression of Vice; railing at the Zeal of such as have appear'd most forward in his Master's Interest; charging all with *Hypocrisy* that seem to be better Men than others; making his Court to the Enemies of Religion, the Profane and Dissolute, by ridiculing the Endeavours of those that would restrain them; and by joining with them to asperse and villify their Reformers, encouraging the Wickedness, Malice, and Opposition of such as *bate to be reformed*. Is not this acting directly contrary to your Instructions? Is it not *perverting* your Commission, and *betraying* the Interests of GOD and Goodness, which you were sent to *propagate*, and *supporting* Immorality instead of *suppressing* it? This, Sir, is the genuine Consequence of what you have said, tho' in Charity I hope it was not your Intention. And whenever you shall do that Justice to your Reason, as to reflect impartially and calmly upon things, I perswade myself you will be sensible that the angry Character you have given of these Societies is highly misbecoming the Mouth of a *Christian Minister*; especially *in the Pulpit*, where the Freedom

of speaking was never intended for a Freedom of Defaming; and more especially when the thing you there *arraign*, and bend your Discourse to *expose*, is a manifest Undertaking for the Honour of GOD and Religion. All Designs and Endeavours of this kind deserve *Encouragement*, so far as they cannot be justly taxed of Ill; and such as act in them are to be instructed with *Meekness* and *Tenderness*, where they appear to have taken any wrong step. And here a wise and good Man will be *very sure* that the Ill he hears of them (if any such be reported) is *certainly true*, before he accuses them of it, especially in Publick, lest he be found to *fight against GOD*. Now the *Societies* for *Reformation of Manners*, propose to suppress the scandalous Practices of *Blasphemy*, prophane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, *Drunkenness*, *Lewdness*, *Prophanation of the Lord's Day*, and other Enormities, which are so justly offensive to every one who has the sense he ought to have of the Religion of CHRIST; and this they propose to do, by convicting Offenders before the Magistrate, that they may be punished as the Laws of the Kingdom direct. And that this may be strengthened the more by other pious and charitable Methods, they have

have been at great expence in printing and dispersing many thousands of Books, small Tracts, and Papers, to dissuade Men from the prevailing Sins and Vices of the Age, to convince them of the Wickedness and Danger of such Practices, and to warn them of the just severity of our Laws, that if they will hearken to Religion and Prudence, they may take up in Time, and not expose themselves to Punishment; or if they have been already punished, they may be satisfied of the Good that was intended them by it. And have not all these Proposals and Attempts for Reformation a most immediate Tendency to the Honour of GOD and Religion? You own your self they have the *Appearance of Good*, when you call them *Sanctified Pretences*; and till you could prove that they are *no more than* Pretences to Sanctity, or wicked Designs covered by such Pretences, (which you will never be able to do) the whole Christian World will say they deserv'd a better Treatment. If you thought them defective in point of Prudence, Method, or any thing else, the Fear of giving Encouragement to Vice, by openly reproaching those that would correct it, should have put you upon a more private way of intimating your

Disatisfaction. I will answer for them, they would have taken it kindly, if you, or any other that may have as ill an Opinion of them, had, in a friendly and generous manner, inform'd them of any Error in their Proceedings, or any Objection against their Undertaking: but to express your first Dislike in so virulent a Manner, and before so grand an Audience, and in such furious and reviling Terms, to inflame the Populace against them, was very rude and barbarous Usage.

If you say, they're a pack of *Hypocrites*, and deserve no Favour; I reply, that as *Hypocrisy* is not to be encourag'd, so neither is *Immorality* and *Profaneness*: and yet these last, I'm confident, will be more encourag'd by *your Sermon*, than ever *Hypocrisy* will be by *the Societies*. The printing and dispersing of *that*, (especially under the Advantage of your new-acquir'd Popularity) will scatter thro' the Kingdom such an envenom'd Rancour against all Attempts of Reformation, that Vice will gather Heart apace, in spite of all the Power of Laws and Conscience; and vicious Men will grow more obstinate in their Wickedness, when they find the Ministers of Religion vilifying such Methods
as

as are set on foot to curb them. And with how ill a Grace, Sir, did you and your Council declaim so loudly and solemnly at your late Tryal,

* That our Laws against Impiety and Vice are not duly executed, when your *Derby-Sermon* labours with such a mighty Torrent of Reproaches, to bear down and blacken those that sin-

* Vid. Dr. Henchman, Mr. Phipps, and Mr. Dodd, upon the Fourth Article of Impeachment; and Dr. Sacheverel's Speech before the Lords.

cerely endeavour to put those Laws in execution. You imagine they do it only in *Hypocrisy*: but pray, Sir, favour us with your Reasons for so severe a Charge. Is it merely because they appear in *Behalf of Religion*, that the Name of GOD may not be so impudently profaned, nor his solemn Worship and his Day neglected, nor Lewdness so abound in every Corner, nor Intemperance and Excess prevail? If *this* be Hypocrisy, every Christian in the World is bound to be a Hypocrite; for it is no more than his Religion requires of him. I could easily prove at large, if I had time, that an active and diligent Zeal for the reforming *others*, is as truly a Christian Duty as to be reform'd *Himself*; and that we cannot better attest the *Sincerity*

cerity of our own Pretensions to Virtue, than by desiring that every body else should become Virtuous too: so far is this from being a Mark of *Hypocrisy*. Yet in your Sermon, you have this plain, and give me leave to add this *horrible* and *shocking* Position (speaking of the Informers against Vice) that *The shew of more Zeal and Purity is the most infallible Token of a dextrous and refined Hypocrite and Knave.* (Pag. 8.)

What can be the Meaning of this, but that whoever appears to have more Religion and Goodness than his Neighbours, or offers to shew a greater Zeal than People generally have for the Honour of GOD, and the Punishment of vicious Practices, must infallibly be a very extraordinary Hypocrite, and a most expert Knave? which, I am sure, is directly contrary to the whole Tenor of the Scriptures; which all along encourage us to aim at a generous Perfection (a) in every Virtue, to be as much

(a) Gen. xviii. 1.

Matt. v. 47, 48.

2. Cor. vii. 1.

2. Tim. iii. 17.

1. Thess. iv. 1.

(b) Exod. xxiii. 2.

Matt. v. 20,

Rom. xii. 2.

Phil. ii. 15.

Jam. i. 27.

better than others (b) as we can, and to shew our Zeal against Impiety upon all Occasions. Of which last I will only mention the famous Instance of *Phineas*, who was

(c) re-

(c) rewarded, even to his late Posterity, with the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his GOD, in punishing the Lewdness of Zimri and Cosbi; and it was counted to him for (d) Righteousness to all Generations for ever. What would have

(c) Numb. xxv.
13.

(d) Psalm cvi.
31.

become of Phinehas's Reputation, if it was to be judg'd by your Censure? He certainly shew'd more Zeal than all the Congregation of Israel at that time: for tho' they were all gathered together at the Door of the Tabernacle, (e) weeping, upon the Sentence GOD had passed upon them for the general Lewdness and Idolatry; tho' they pretended to lament the prevalence of Immorality and Profaneness, and the Danger of their Church thereby; and tho' all of them saw Zimri bring in the Midianitish Woman, to be lewd with her, not one of them stirred to execute Judgment, and put a stop to the Inundation of Impiety, at which they seemed to be so much concern'd, by any seasonable Punishment, but Phinehas; and He, it seems, could not

(e) Numbers
xxv. 6.

not bear to see Iniquity so presuming, without going somewhat further to suppress it than Prayers and Tears, or even *Reproofs*; for he proceeded to immediate Punishment, and that even without the formality of a legal Tryal or Conviction, which our Informers never do. Now, according to your Rule, he was no better than a forward *Hypocrite* and a *Knave*: but GOD, the righteous Judge, determined very much otherwise, and I hope you cannot be long in concluding whether of the two we should believe. I am willing to hope, that those Expressions fell from you without discerning their pernicious Tendency and Extent: but in so degenerate an Age, wherein we see People glad to catch at any thing, especially from the Pulpit, that may encourage them in their hatred of Goodness and Good Men, it will be (and, I doubt not, *has* been by many Thousands of your Readers and Hearers) so understood and made use of. I lay the natural Consequences of that Expression before you, that, if you please, you may take an Opportunity to explain yourself better in this Point.

But

But to return to your Charge of *Hypocrisy* laid upon the *Societies*. Some Men indeed, from a most uncharitable Forwardness and Heat of Temper, have a notable Assurance in pronouncing (as they pretend to great Sagacity in discovering) *Hypocrites*: but I have hitherto been humbly of Opinion that 'tis G O D's Prerogative alone to know the *Hearts* of Men and their Sincerity, except they betray themselves by *overt Acts*. If, pretending to make others good, the Reformers themselves live wickedly, tho' it be but in any one *indulged* and *habitual* Instance, the Scripture will allow us to pronounce them *Hypocrites*: but I will be bold to say, that those of the *Societies* for *Reformation of Manners* have approved themselves to all that know them, to be such whose *Morals* are no Contradiction to their *Zeal*. They are chosen from all Parts of the Kingdom for their unblemish'd Characters and Strictness of Life; none but such being by their standing Orders to be admitted amongst them. They are such as devoutly frequent the public Worship, and have been (many of them) instrumental in setting up *daily Prayers*, *weekly Sacraments*, and *evening Lectures* in our Churches, to the great advantage of Religion; their Profession whereof they adorn by a pious and exemplary

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emplary Conversation, truly endeavouring to give Good Examples, while they attempt to suppress BAD ones. I will not answer for every particular Man, tho' I know not one Exception amongst them; for in such a Multitude as (blessed be God) they are able, in spite of all the Opposition and Malice of their Enemies, to say they have, who are engaged in these Societies, 'tis not impossible there may be some ill Men; whom however I dare affirm they would not suffer to be amongst them if they knew it; and consequently those few cannot be *notorious and scandalous* for their Vices, tho' in the Eye of God they may be Hypocrites. Supposing therefore (tho' not granting) that there are some such, let me beg you, Sir, to consider, whether it be reasonable from thence to conclude, that *the whole Body* of Reformers are no better; shall all the Apostles be Villains for the sake of Judas? to argue at this rate proves nothing but the censorious Passion of an Adversary.

If their Morals then be not exceptionable, (as for the Generality they are not,) by what other Tokens shall we discover this *dextrous and refined Hypocrisy* you charge them with? If, pretending to act only from a Zeal for God and Virtue, they are all the while projecting for Applause, or fly-ly

ly *filling their Pockets*; if they melt down Godliness into worldly Gain, taking Money by way of *Reward* for *detecting* Offenders, or by way of *Bribery* for *concealing* them; I shall acknowledge they are very justly to be censured: but neither of these is the Case of the *Societies*. As for *Applause* they neither desire nor have it: they don't *desire it*, because they generally keep their Names as private as they can; and that they *have it not* is plain, for they are generally reviled, despised and hated. And as for *getting Money by it*, the Societies know of no such Practice amongst them. You will not expect they should prove a *Negative*; the Proof lies upon those that accuse them: and that any such Reward or Bribe was ever taken by any Member of the Societies, by their Direction, or with their Knowledge and Approbation (whatever false and slanderous Accounts may have imposed upon those that are willing to believe ill of them,) is resolutely and firmly denied, and they challenge all the World to prove it. I must do them the Justice upon this occasion to declare, that tho' by the Members of a Society in my Neighbourhood, I have had some hundreds of Informations brought before me, and Convictions form'd and prosecuted thereupon, not one of the

Informers ever had or desired to have, directly or indirectly any Part of the Penalty, (that being always entirely given to the Poor of the Parish where the Offence was committed,) nor to my Knowledge any other Reward, Salary, or Stipend whatsoever for their Services; and I have very good Reasons to believe the same of other Societies as well as *this*. I will not deny, that by the Villany of Parish-Officers (searching Lewd-Houses, Taverns, or the like, by command of the Justices, and without any personal Concern for the suppression of Vice,) Offences may have been frequently wink'd at for a Bribe, and perhaps an infamous Toleration stipulated with Offenders for a Salary; or that several private Persons (with a malicious design perhaps to bring a *Scandal* upon the *Societies*, as well as to get *Money* for *themselves*;) may have taken upon them (usurping for their present Turn the Name and Character of Reformers) to do the same; but it is positively denied that any of these belong'd to the Societies, were Members of any of them, or acted by their Direction or Encouragement. And is it reasonable that Honest Men should bear the Scandal of *their* Hypocrisy and Knavery with whom they have no manner of Concern? If it be al-
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ledged, that any Person who really is a Member of a Society for Reformation has got Money by such villanous Practices, let the Fact be made out by credible and sufficient Proof, and the Society he belongs to will (I am confident) discard him with Abhorrence.

But to proceed; tho' they do not disgrace their Profession by any scandalous Behaviour or unworthy Artifices, yet they may be Hypocrites, you'll say, upon another score: for you tell us, that what they do for Reformation of Manners is no better than *the base Product* (pag. 10.) of *Ill Nature, Spiritual Pride, Censoriousness, and Sanctified Spleen*. And here, by the by, I must take notice, what a particular Pleasure you seem to have in *ridiculing* the word *Sanctified*. You have used it thrice in your *Derby Sermon*, and once in that before the *Lord-Mayor* upon the 5th of *November*, and in every one of those Places affronted it by an odious and offensive Application; *Sanctified Villany* (a), *Sanctified Pretence* (b), *Sanctified Spleen* (c), and *Sanctified Hypocrites* (d); Which seems to me to be delivered with as much Rancour and Bitterness, as if *Sanctification* were another of your *infallible Tokens of a Hypocrite*.

(a) *Derby Sermon*, p. 7.
(b) *ib.* p. 8.
(c) *ib.* p. 10.
(d) *Serm. Nov. 5*, p. 15.

write and a Knave: but I'm sure the Word is very *profanely*, if not *blasphemously* used, when it serves for nothing but to describe a Villain by, and to wound Religion its self thro' the Sides of Hypocrisy. To let that alone and return to your Charge; if it be as you say, I grant you they are a Pack of Sullen Hypocrites, but I must here again demand a Proof: for, as I said before, you cannot pretend to judge of Men's inward Principles, but by their outward Practices; and he that judges otherwise is plainly enough *cenforious* and *ill-natur'd*, whatever the Reformers are. If you say, that *the bringing of our Neighbours to Punishment* is its self an Overt Act of Ill Nature, &c. and that the Principle it proceeds from is therefore visible enough in the Effect; I deny it, 'tis a perfect begging of the Question. For what do the Reformers design by it? is it to be revenged for an Injury done them? if so it would indeed be Spleen and Ill-Nature: but that is the farthest from their Thoughts. Many of those against whom they inform being no otherwise known to them than by their Names and their Offences, how can there be personal Injuries or Malice in the Case? or if they *are* acquainted with them, does it follow that they must needs have suffered an ill Turn from them?

or if they *have*, that they inform to be revenged of them? for considering how very small the Penalties are upon Vice, 'tis certainly the best natured Malice in the World that will be so easily satisfied; for Revenge usually finds out more injurious and heavy Retributions. Besides, that what they do in bringing Vice to Punishment by Informations is a great and real Charity to the Offender, if trying to stop and pull him back in his Carriere to Hell that he may not blindly destroy himself for ever by his wicked Courses be allow'd to be Charity; and that they indeed *design* a Kindness (not an Injury) in Informing is evident from this, that they spare not their *best and dearest Friends*, if they be vicious and above the Influence of Reproof, any more than others. If you say they do it from a general Delight they take in being *troublesome*, their Enemies themselves will grant that they are every *other* way of peaceable and quiet Behaviour; and why shall we suppose a Principle that does not govern them in any thing else?

That it is owing to *Spiritual Pride* is merely the Language of a crude and inconsiderate Passion: For it can't be supposed without an Absurdity. It is the very *Nature* of *Pride*, the inseparable and essential Property of

of it, not only to make a Man think himself better than his Neighbours, but so to value himself for the advantages he has above them, that he never can desire *their Improvement*, lest they should sometime or other tread upon his Heels and be as good as himself. Thus it is in all Cases, whatever is the particular advantage upon which a *Proud Man values himself*. If *Riches*, he would have no body so rich; if *Power*, no body so powerful; if *Learning*, no body so famous for it; if *Grandour*, no body so great as *himself*. Now if the Informers against Vice were so puffed up with the Conceit of their abundant Goodness, as you uncharitably imagine, how comes it to pass that they use their utmost Endeavours to make all other Men as good and virtuous as themselves? The more vicious their Neighbours are, the more it would set off *them*: why then do they take such pains to reform and make them better? If Offenders change their Course, leave off their Profaneness, Intemperance, Lewdness, and dissolute Talk, come constantly to Church, and spend the rest of the Lord's Day in Retirement within their own Families, as the Law commands them, and as these Reformers in prosecution of those Laws would oblige them to do, pray where would be the outward Difference be-

twixt

twixt them? The World would think as well of such a reclaimed Offender as of his busy Reformer; and then, the latter, aiming (as you suppose) at a Superior *Reputation* for his Virtue, would lose his End. So that I cannot conceive the Schemes of Reformation to be at all owing to *Spiritual Pride*, or indeed consistent with it.

The Charge of *Censoriousness* will be out of Doors, when you consider that that Vice is chiefly exercised in *Magnifying little Things*, and falling foul upon Men for what is hardly to be called a Fault; or in judging feverely of Mens *Hearts* and *secret Principles* and *Intentions*; or in putting the worst *Construction* upon harmless and inoffensive Words and Actions; or concluding the *Certainty* of Ill from the bare *Possibility* of it: but the Societies for Reformation are not in the least concern'd in any of these. They meddle not with the secret Principles of Men, (for that seems to be *your* particular Talent,) but take cognizance only of their *Words* and *outward Actions*; and amongst these, they take notice only of such Offences as the Legislature has thought necessary to be punished; not small and trifling Faults, but those of *impudent Profaneness*, *Swearing*, *Cursing*, *Blasphemy*, *Lewdness*, *Drunkenness*, *Profanation of the Lord's Day*, &c. which are

scandalous Offences, and open Contempts of Religion, which draw down the Judgments of GOD upon us, and endanger the flourishing Condition of our Church, as you acknowledge, Sir, in your Speech before the House of Lords; and yet even these *portentous Crimes* pass under the Names of CHRISTIAN LIBERTY and INNOCENCE in your Derby Sermon. For those gross Vices abovementioned, with others of the same Rank and Flagrancy, I'm sure are ALL (and you very well know they are all) that the *Societies for Reformation* set themselves to correct. And indeed, how can they pretend to more? for their Endeavours are to further the Execution of the *Laws*; and therefore where the Law is silent, they cannot act. Yet you declare against them with this express Description, that *under the sanctified Pretence of Reformation of Manners* they turn Informers, assume an odious and a factious Office, arrogantly intrench upon others CHRISTIAN LIBERTY and INNOCENCE, and under the Shew of more Zeal and Purity, &c. Is it come to this then, Sir, that Debauchery and Lewdness, Blasphemy, Swearing, and Cursing shall be accounted *Innocent*, and be shelter'd under the harmless Name of *Christian Liberty*? Whither will the Fury of our Detractors hurry

hurry them? But to return to our Argument, and conclude It; If the Reformers meddle not (as they neither *do* nor *can*) with any thing but the Prosecution of *flagrant* and *enormous* Vices, they cannot be said to flourish upon *little* Things, to busy themselves with *Motes*, with the *trifling* *Slips* and *Frailties* of Mankind; nor yet to dive into *Mens Hearts*; or put ill-natur'd Glosses upon Words or Actions that will not bear them; nor lastly to convict Men upon bare *Surmises* and *Suspitions*; for that they inform of nothing but what they *see* and *hear*, and take *their Oaths* upon: and therefore may very well expect to be acquitted of the Charge of *Censoriousness* in what they do. And if (as I hope I have fully proved) their Zeal for Religion is not in its self to be blamed, and if no ill Examples appear in them to disgrace it, nor any secular Views to corrupt it; if what they do proceeds not from ill Nature, spiritual Pride or Censoriousness; but (as I verily believe it does) from the Fear of God, an earnest Desire to see the Practice of Vice suppressed, and to bring their Neighbourhood to good Order and good Morals; they demand with a great deal of Reason to be discharged from the black Character of *Hypocrites*.

But you have still more to say of them in Page 10. where you tell us, that *Whatever godly and fallacious Glosses such troublesome Wasps that erect into illegal Inquisitions may cast upon their Actions, they are doubtless the unwarrantable Effects of an idle, inroaching, impertinent, and meddling Curiosity; a Vice as contrary to the true generous Spirit of Christianity as it is to Good Manners and Justice.* In this Period, Sir, so very stiff with Epithets, you seem to have laboured under the Force of a more than ordinary Passion: Your *Articles of Impeachment* croud so thick upon the *Societies*, I hardly know where to begin their Defence. The *godly and fallacious Glosses* you speak of, I have cleared already, and proved that there is no *Hypocrisy* in the Case. *Troublesome* perhaps they are; but 'tis only to the *Profane and Vicious*, and that too upon no other account than their *Vices and Prophaneness*. If they sting, 'tis only those whose Consciences should now, and will hereafter, without a timely Repentance, sting them much worse than our Laws and those that put them in Execution have or can do. And does it trouble you, Sir, to find the Repose of Wickedness disturbed? to find ill Men disquieted for their Offences, and Sin made burdensome and uneasy to them? You tell us indeed, these

Reformers,

Reformers, p. 8. *turn the World upside down, and set all Mankind into Quarrels and Confusions*; But the very same was said of St. Paul and Silas, by the Jews of *Thessalonica*, for no other Reason than *Acts 17. 6.* that they preached the Gospel of CHRIST; and 'tis charged upon the Societies for Reformation too, only because they stand up for the Honour of that Holy Religion which St. Paul and Silas preached, and endeavour to put a stop to those dissolute and wretched Practices that are a Scandal to it. If any Disturbance happen upon what they do, 'tis *Vice*, unwilling to be Reformed, that makes it. And thus our Saviour prophesied even of *the Gospel of Peace*, that tho' the Intention and the genuine Nature of it was *Love and Charity*, yet very uncharitable Heats and Animosities should be occasion'd by it: but is *Christianity* to be blamed for this? No surely, 'tis the *Corruption, Pride, and Faction* of bad Christians that must answer for it. The same is to be said for those Schemes of Reformation you are so angry at: Their whole Design and the natural Tendency of them is to make Men good and virtuous; but those that should be made so quarrel with the Reformer for his kind Endeavours; and whatever Confusions do arise, I'm sure it is from
that

that Quarter. Would *they* submit to the Punishment of Laws, with that *Passive Obedience* and *Non Resistance* that becomes them, every thing would go smoothly on; Vice would be quickly out of Countenance, and Virtue and good Morals, Peace and Order would generally obtain. But all the Disturbance springs from their *perverse Opposition* to the Laws that ought to govern them, and not from such as endeavour to have those Statutes faithfully executed; for if the *Law* be good and necessary, the *Execution* of it must be so. But further, I desire to know, *where* and *betwixt whom* are the Quarrels you complain of? A *Quarrel* implies the mutual Contention and Resentment of *both Parties*; but this I assure you I know nothing of in the present Case. Indeed the Vicious and Prophanes are Angry, and *shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words*, the same that you have borrowed from them in your Sermon: but the *Societies* are willing to bear them all. *Being reviled, they bless; being persecuted, they suffer it; being defamed, they entreat*; well knowing that the great Author of Blessedness has pronounced them Blessed, *when Men shall revile and persecute them, and shall say all manner of Evil against them falsely, for his sake, for the sake of their Duty and their Zeal for Him.* And so far

far are they from breaking the Peace of the Neighbourhood, and raising any Confusions or Disturbances, that their Endeavours tend to *prevent* Quarrels and Confusions, by taking away the *Causes* of them: for are not *Lewdness*, *Drunkennes*, and *Gaming* the common Occasions of Passion and ill Blood? So that the Quarrels and Confusions you refer to, as occasioned by the *Societies* for *Reformation* are (for ought I see) no where to be found, but in the Dreams of a Cholerick Fancy.

To return now to your Paragraph, *p. 10.* where in spite of all that can be said for them, you positively pronounce their Actions to be *unwarrantable*, and the *Effects* of *an idle, incroaching, impertinent, and meddling Curiosity*. A hard Sentence; but you will pardon if I do not look upon you as the Sovereign Judge in this Matter; I hope an Appeal will lye, and the Judgment may be reverfible. Or if I should allow your Opinion some Respect, (as I am willing to be civil,) I may appeal at least from *You* to *your self* without Offence. You tell us in this same Sermon excellently well, *p. 6.* that “*We may be Partakers of other Mens Sins by CONNIVING at, Consenting to, or CONCEALING them; that where we are invested with Authority, as in* “ the

“ the case of all public Offices and Ad-
 “ ministrations, or where the Precepts of
 “ *Humanity, Civil Justice, or Religion* re-
 “ quire us to interpose and restrain the
 “ Commission of any vicious Act; there,
 “ either thro’ Carelesness and Negligence,
 “ Partiality or Impunity in the one, *Con-*
 “ *nivance, Consent, or Concealment* in the
 “ other, we become Partakers of the Crime
 “ committed”. And the Reason you give
 for it is very home to the purpose: “ for vi-
 “ cious Customs, say you, steal on us gra-
 “ dually, and by every fresh Advancement
 “ get Ground and Strength, till at last by
 “ many multiplied Acts they *Etablish* them-
 “ selves, grow headstrong, irresistible, and
 “ out of the reach of Controul or Correcti-
 “ on, *which the least Discipline seasonably ap-*
 “ *plied to in a State of Infirmary had check’d and*
 “ *suppressed in the very Birth.* And therefore
 “ you again remind us, p. 8. that we may
 “ be Partakers of other Mens Sins if we do
 “ not endeavour to the *utmost of our Power*
 “ to *prevent or stop* their Commission, when
 “ they break in upon *Religion*, or assault the
 “ *Glory of God.* Nay, you assure us fur-
 “ ther, that He that does not appear in Op-
 “ position to that which it is his Duty to
 “ prevent or suppress, must at least be justly
 “ concluded *not to be against it*; and that the
 “ Man

“ Man that acts not evidently *against*
 “ any Party or Design is a real *Promoter*
 “ or *Encourager* of its Interests. And
 “ in (P. 8.) you add, that “ not to endea-
 “ vour to *destroy*, is to *promote* the King-
 “ dom of the Devil, and to *side with* the
 “ Powers of Darkneſs. *There is no trim-*
 “ *ming Moderation in this Caſe*, no ſtanding
 “ in a *Neutrality* or *Indifference*, we muſt
 “ be *offenſive* or *defenſive*, and ſerve GOD
 “ or *Belial*. Now what is it poſſible you
 ſhould mean by *conniving at* and *concealing*
 other Mens Sins, by which we become *Par-*
takers of them, but the letting them paſs
 without Correction, and not diſcovering
 them to the Magiſtrate that they may be
 Punished? It's true, *Connivance* may alſo
 relate to the *not reprov*ing them: but *Con-*
cealment, I think, can ſignify nothing elſe
 (conſidering the Occaſion upon which
 you introduce that word) than *not Informing*.
 For *Concealment* cannot here be oppoſed to
 the publiſhing in *common Converſation* the
 Faults of our Neighbours; ſo to conceal
 them being a part of Chriſtian Charity,
 which can never entitle us to a ſhare of the
 Guilt of them. But that it relates entire-
 ly to the *not informing*, is plain by this,
 that you ſpeak of it here as the parallel

Guilt of a *private Person*, answerable to that of a *Magistrate* in *not punishing*. Presuming therefore, as we necessarily must, that by *Concealment* you mean the *not Informing* in order to the legal Punishing of Vice, you could not more fully justify the *Societies* from your own Objection; for if *they do not inform*, you tell them very truly, that *they are partakers of the Sin*; and surely then all the World will excuse them from the Charge of *Meddling* and *Impertinence* in Informing, when they cannot otherwise preserve the Integrity of their own Consciences, but shall draw upon themselves the Guilt of other Mens Iniquities by concealing them. Especially, since (as you very well observe) “ He who acts not evidently “ *against any Party is a real Encourager* of “ it, and not to endeavour to *destroy*, is to “ *promote* the Kingdom of the Devil, and to “ *side with* the Powers of Darkn^es. It seems they must either act in the *suppression* of Vice, or they encourage it. Where then is the *Meddling with what they have nothing to do?* where’s the *idle, impertinent, and incroaching Curiosity* you charge upon them? For considering the notorious Wickedness that reigns abroad, the Prevalence of that Kingdom of the Devil, and those Powers of Dark-

Darkness, in every Part of the Nation, and the Judgments of GOD that hang over us upon that Account; is it not high Time for every Christian to declare himself? to list under the Banners of Religion, and stand up for the Honour of it? except he has a mind to joyn with the opposite Party, and enter into the Guilt of other Mens Sins. *To sit still* will be, according to your own Decision, to *promote* and *encourage* the prevailing Power of Wickedness: and therefore to take up Arms against it, by informing the Magistrate, and calling in the Authority of humane Laws to restrain it, must be so far from deserving those ill Names you give it, that the Fidelity Men owe to GOD and Virtue cannot otherwise be discharged.

And here, Sir, I can't but take it for a great Absurdity, if not an absolute Contradiction, in your Sermon, that after you have called so loudly and zealously upon the *Magistrates* (Pag. 6, 7.) to *put the Laws against Vice in Execution*, upon peril of partaking in other Mens Sins, you proceed in the very next Pages to explode *Informing*; (P. 8, 10.) and that without any Restriction to the *Methods*, or to any *Abuses* of it, directly levelling *at the thing itself*: for you tell us, (P. 10.) "That if the Friendly

“ Overtures of *Admonition* and *Reproof*
 “ prevail not, we have wash’d our Hands
 “ of the Guilt, stand acquitted before
 “ GOD and our Consciences, and have
 “ nothing more to do to the Prevention or
 “ Suppression of Sin. But a Magistrate
 has no more Eyes and Ears than another
 Man, and if you won’t allow him the As-
 sistance of those that are able and willing
 to *inform*, you utterly *disable him* from do-
 ing *any effectual Service* against Vice. There
 are comparatively but very few Offences *he*
 can be suppos’d to see or hear, and conse-
 quently to punish, without Information
 given him; and what Effect are those few
 Instances of Punishment like to have in the
 suppression of popular and prevailing
 Wickedness? What can a *Judge* and *Jury*
 do without their Evidence? So that your
 calling for the Execution of the Laws is
 but a *solemn Banter*. You call upon the
 Magistrate to draw the Sword of Justice,
 but you tie his Hands behind him; you
 would have him Punish, and yet allow no
 Witness of the Fact; *i.e.* you say and unsay
 with a Breath. The Civil Magistrate is to
 be a Terror to Evil Works, he is not to
 bear the Sword in vain; but to execute
 Wrath upon him that does Evil: and if it
 be

be *his* Duty to *punish* Wickedness, it must be ours to *forward* and *assist* him. " The *gentle Admonitions*, the *tender Reproofs*, " the *kind Advices*, and *insinuating Perswasions* with which you say (P. 10.) we ought to interpose for the prevention of Sin, or reclaiming the Offender, are certainly Excellent and Christian Methods, beautiful in their Season, and to be try'd in the first place, if we have Prudence enough to manage them, Acquaintance enough with the Offender to gain Access to him, Opportunity to do that Charitable Office, and where 'tis likely to have effect upon him. But those Methods are clog'd with so many difficulties (as you observe yourself;) so many Niceties with respect to the *Manner* and *Address*, the *Time* and *Place* of the Reproof; to the *Temper* and *other Circumstances* of the Person reprovng and to be reprov'd; all which must be cautiously considered to make the thing effectual; that very few, I doubt, are qualified either to *do* or to *receive* Good in that way; and every Day's Experience shews *the little Regard* such soft and mild Endeavours generally meet with: and therefore somewhat further is to be done, if we would fairly acquit ourselves of the Guilt of other Peoples Sins, by doing what

we

we can to put a stop to them. If Reproof will not prevail, as we have Reason to think it will not with ninety nine in an hundred, we cannot justify ourselves without bringing them to legal Punishment.

Prov. x. 13.

— xxvi. 3.

A Rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding, says Solomon, i.e. for such as

* Prov. xii. 1.

will not *bear* * or *bearken* to Reproof; and indeed to what

purpose have we Laws, if Punishments are not to be inflicted?

You tell us, (P. 8.) that Informing is *forbidden in Scripture*, under the Duties of *Peace* and *Quietness*, of *covering* and *concealing* our *Brother's Sins and Infirmities*. But tho' we are oblig'd to *follow peace with all men*, yet not with their *Profaneness* and *Wickedness*; and accordingly 'tis not the **MEN** that our Reformers contend with, but their **VICES**. You yourself acknowledge that there can be no *Neutrality* betwixt the Kingdom of **GOD** and that of **Satan**; and therefore to proclaim *Peace* with *Iniquity*, is to proclaim *War* with *Religion*. As to the *covering* and *concealing* our *Brother's Sins and Infirmities*; you know well enough, that the Precept cannot relate to informing of notorious Offences
punish-

punishable by Law, but concerns only the needless divulging of our Neighbours Faults in Conversation: so that I need not trouble myself with confuting such a forced Construction of the Text, which a very moderate Skill in Divinity will serve to put out of Countenance.

In the same Page of your Sermon you call *Informing* an *odious* and a *factionous* Office. As to the *Odium* of it, I can only say, 'tis not the first good Cause that has suffer'd that way without deserving it: the Gospel itself *was every*

Afts xxviii. 22.

where spoken against, and yet was never the worse for popular Hatred. As to its being a *factionous* Office; I wish the Government had no worse Friends (I'm sure it has not many better) than our Informers against Vice, nor is there a more effectual Method to preserve it. For unpunish'd Wickedness is a Canker that, first or last, will eat into the very Bowels of it, and reduce the most flourishing Kingdoms (as it has done many) to Destruction. The *Church* (you will grant me surely) is not in any Danger from the *Informers*: for the Danger of *that* * arises from those Crimes which *they* endeavour

* Dr. Sacheverell's
Speech before the House
of Lords.

to

to suppress; and therefore if you would be just to them, you must own they are so far from designing any Faction against the Church, that they do her the best of Services, by striking at the Root of all her Fears, *Debauchery* and *Irreligion*.

But your Quarrel with Informing is more particularly with *Societies* to promote the giving of Informations. And where is the *Faction* or the *Harm* of these? *Societies* in *Trade* are found no Fault with; and why shall those that are intended for *more noble Purposes*? Why shall not many Heads be allowed to consult and encourage one another for the *suppression of Vice*, as well as others to concert the Interests of *Stock* and *Merchandice*? If Reformation of Manners be a desirable and necessary Thing, as you will grant it is, why shall the most effectual Methods for it be discountenanc'd? It is too great a Work to be accomplish'd by any one single Person, or even by many single Persons disunited.

Derby-Sermon,
Pag. 10.

“ There must be Co-opera-
“ tors, Partners, and Under-
“ workers in it, (as you say in another
“ Case,) who, like the several Actors in a
“ well form'd Drama, must contribute
“ their various Parts to the main Body of
“ the

“ the Action, and all conspire and unite
 “ in the conclusion of the Design. There
 “ must be many Hands employ’d and ma-
 “ ny Confederates let into the Scheme, if it
 “ ever come to any thing. Now if this
 be true, as certainly it is, why shall *Reli-
 gion* and *Virtue* be deprived of such an ad-
 vantage, which has always been thought
 Considerable in the Management of *wordly
 Business*, and has proved but too successful,
 when Debauchery and Vice have taken this
 way to spread themselves? But here you
 fall foul upon them with the LAW, and
 tell us, that Societies for Reformation are
illegal Inquisitions, (P. 10.) This is boldly
 pronounced: but by what *Authority*, is the
 Question. *Gallio*, methinks, Acts xviii. 10.
 acted a discreeter Part, when
 St. Paul being accused before him by the
Jews of preaching contrary to their Law,
 which *He*, being a *Gentile* and a *Roman*, did
 not understand, he declined meddling in
 the Case, and declared *he would be no Judge
 of such Matters*. If you will have *Societies*
 of this kind to be *illegal*, you will be de-
 fired to cite your *Statute*, and let us know
 against what Law they offend; and that’s
 what many eminent Lawyers have often
 enough declared they could not do. You
F
will

will take it for no Affront, I hope, considering your Profession, that I suppose there may be eminent Lawyers abler to determine this Point than your self. If the Law be against them, how comes it to pass that they have never yet been prosecuted? But they are very sure there is no Law that can affect them for what they do in their *Societies*; and if you have been told otherwise, your Council advised you wrong. They don't pretend to any that *establisbes* or *incorporates* such Societies: but they can never be deem'd *illegal* for want of that; it is enough that they have none *against* them. The Nickname of *Inquisitions* you are pleased to give them, is only thrown in for Odium-fake, and deserves no Confutation. But when you so falsely charge them, in the same Page, with *villanous* and *wicked Methods*, "*pretending, as you say, to carry on the work*" "*of Reformation by Lying, Slandering,*" "*Whispering, Backbiting and Talebearing,*" you will hardly expect I should be silent. Were all this *real*, it would give the justest Prejudice in the World against them, and they would indeed deserve the Character of *Knaves* and *Hypocrites*: but if all this be false, as with the utmost solemnity they declare it is, be pleased to consider what Reparation

paration ought to be made for such a black and abominable Scandal, 'tis impossible, Sir, you should have such a Notion of them, if you were not a perfect Stranger to them and their Proceedings, and if you had not been grossly impos'd upon and abus'd by those that have pretended to represent them to you. The Informer is *upon his Oath* in every Information; and why should you suppose them, without any former Experience or Conviction, or any Ground for it now but angry suspicion, to be of such profligate Consciences, so lost to all Regards of Honour, Justice, or a future state, as to be Guilty, not only of *Lying* and *notorious Slandering*, but of downright *deliberate Perjury*? Good Sir, reflect a little; where's the Charity of a *Christian*, or even the common Good-nature of a *Man*? As to your odious Insinuations of *Whispering*, *Backbiting*, and *Tale-bearing*, (which neither in Scripture, nor in the common Language of Mankind, refer to any thing else than *ordinary Conversation*;) they are falsely and impertinently applied to *Evidence* given *before a Magistrate*, which no body before you ever called by those Names. But we find by experience to how great a Length unguarded Passion hurries Men; for concluding the

urious and uncharitable Reflections by which you have endeavoured to blacken the *Societies for Reformation*, you are pleased to compare them to *the Devil*, (P. 10.) the *grand Accuser of the Brethren*. To whom the Comparison best agrees, let the impartial Reader judge. For I will be bold to say, there never was more of Spleen, and Passion, and Falshood raked together, in so small a Compass, against the Friends of Religion and Virtue, than in those six or seven Lines of (P. 8.) and those fifteen of (P. 10.) in your *Derby* Sermon, which have been the Subject of these Remarks.

And now, Sir, give me leave to represent the *Rashness*, as I have already done the *Injustice*, of your Conduct, in forming so severe a Judgment of them, against the Authority of your Governors, both in Church and State, and the Approbation of the Greatest, the Wisest, and the Best both in our own and Foreign Countries. You have the Credit indeed (such as it is,) which no good Man will envy you, to be *the first* that has published a Satyr upon these Societies *with the Author's Name to it*. For in the course of so many years that they have been on foot, and their Designs of Reformation vigorously pursued, not a Man, that

that I can hear of, but your self, since the first opposition to them in their Infancy, has thought fit to venture his Reputation so far as to put his Name to any thing in print against them; or so much as *pretend* to tell us of any ill Consequences from such a scheme either to our Ecclesiastical or Civil Establishment. The World must therefore think it somewhat extraordinary, after so many thousand Persons have been *punished* for their wicked Practices, and a far greater Number must in all Reason be supposed to have been *restrained* at least in their Inclination to the like Indulgencies, and many of them wanting neither *Wit* nor *Malice* (if they had not wanted *Argument* and *Courage*,) to attack the Societies as openly as you have done; that one of Dr. Sacheverell's Profession should be the first bold Advocate to plead the Cause of Impiety and Vice *bare faced*. And this will appear yet stranger, when the public Approbation and Encouragement which has been given to those *Societies* by the most eminent of all Ranks and Orders shall be consider'd. An Honour done to them, of which you cannot be ignorant: for though by your unworthy and wrong Opinion of them 'tis reasonable to presume you never gave *your self* the
 Trou-

Trouble, or did them the Justice to peruse the Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, long since dispersed thro' the Kingdom, and many of them chained upon the Tables of public Houses, and particularly in a Place where you have resided many Years: yet 'tis not to be imagined that you had not some time or other the Curiosity to open the Book and cast your Eye upon the Beginning of it at least, where you have this remarkable Testimony prefixed;

“ That the Design is truly great and noble;
“ that it tends to the Honour of GOD, the
“ Advancement of Piety and Virtue, and
“ the public Good of Church and State;
“ and that it cannot fail of being approved
“ by all good Men; that the Methods by
“ which the Societies carry on their design
“ are most proper, and (by the Blessing of
“ GOD attending them) most likely to prove
“ effectual to promote a Reformation of
“ Manners: And all this concluded with a
solemn Prayer “ that pious Men of all Ranks
“ and Qualities may concur therein; and
signed by a great Number of the Nobility,
the Ministers of State, the Bishops and
Judges of England. They have been approv'd
in the same public Manner by the Arch-
bishops and Bishops, Nobility and Judges of
Ireland,

Ireland, and by the *Nobility* and *Commissioners of the general Assemblies* of the Church of *Scotland*. They have also been highly applauded and recommended by several learned Divines in *Foreign Countries*, as worthy the Imitation of every Christian State; and in some of those Countries the like *Societies* are *actually carrying on*.

But to ascend yet higher, his late Majesty *K. William* having this Design laid before him by the President of his Council, promised the Societies not only his *Protection*, but *Countenance*; and our *present* most illustrious *Queen*, since the issuing out her Proclamations against Profaneness and Debauchery, has been pleased to signify to the Societies, by one of her Chief Ministers of State, her Approbation of this Work.

Now with what Modesty can *Dr. Sacheverell* contest the Point with all these great Authorities? Is it possible, Sir, you should encourage so vain a Thought as that they were all mistaken and impos'd upon, and *you* the happy Man that have got the start of them all in Penetration? But to shew you a little further what the greatest and the best of *our Clergy* have thought of the Societies and their Methods, give me leave to refer you to part of the present Lord Archbishop
of

of *Canterbury's* Circular Letter dated *April 4. 1699.* With which the Bishops of that Province, in their Letters transmitted with it to their Clergy, concurred.

Paragr. 7. " Every pious Person of the
 " Laity should, if need be,
 " be put in mind, that he ought to think
 " himself obliged to use his best Endeavours
 " to have such Offenders punished by the
 " *Civil Magistrate*, as can no otherwise be a-
 " mended. And that when he hears his
 " Neighbour Swear or *Blaspheme* the Name
 " of GOD, or sees him offend in *Drun-*
 " *kennes*, or *Profanation of the Lord's Day*,
 " he ought to give the Magistrate notice of
 " it. In such a case to be called an *Inform-*
 " *er*, will be so far from making any Man
 " odious in the Judgment of sober Persons,
 " that it will tend to *his Honour*, when he
 " makes it appear by his unblamable Beha-
 " viour, and the care he takes of *himself* and
 " his *Family*, that he does it purely for the
 " Glory of GOD, and the Good of his
 " Brethren. Such well disposed Persons as
 " are resolved upon this, should be encou-
 " raged to meet as oft as they can, and to
 " consult how they may most discreetly and
 " effectually manage it in the Places where
 " they live.

In

In the IVth Paragraph of this Letter, the Clergy are directed to invite the *Church-Wardens* of their several Parishes, and *other pious Persons* amongst the Laity; “ To
 “ join with them in the Execution of the
 “ most probable Methods that can be
 “ suggested, for the carrying on a *Reformation of Manners*; and are told, that
 “ we may reasonably expect very happy
 “ Effects of such a Concurrence, from the
 “ visible Success of that noble Zeal,
 “ wherewith so many about the great
 “ Cities in his Neighbourhood,
 “ † do promote true Piety, † *London and*
 “ and such a Reformation. *Westminster.*

In his Grace's Letter to the Archdeacons and the rest of the Clergy of *St. Davids*, published in 1703, he was pleased to express himself in these Terms.

“ There are a great many
 “ Religious and Worthy Per- *Pag. 9, 10.*
 “ sons, in many Parts of the
 “ Kingdom, who do still make it their
 “ Business to promote the Execution of
 “ good Laws: And I hope any little Indiscretion, which may happen among some
 “ few of them, will not be made a Handle
 “ to disparage all such useful Proceedings. And tho' I am sensible, that it is
 “ not meerly the Fear of the Law, which
 “ must make People true Christians, yet
 G “ how-

however, great Good may be done by
 such Means, through G O D's Blessing.
 And they, who at the first are restrain-
 ed from doing Evil, out of Fear of
 Punishment, may become virtuous up-
 on more spiritual Motives. Likewise
 many Temptations may be remov'd out
 of the Way, especially of young Peo-
 ple, much open Scandal and Dishonour
 to G O D, and our holy Religion,
 may be prevented: And we have also
 Reason to hope, that if the Edge of
 the Law, and the Authority of the Ma-
 gistrate, be turned against Impiety and
 Immorality, G O D will not look upon
 our Sins to be *National*; and so we
 may prevent those Judgments, which
 otherwise they would bring upon us:
 For these Reasons, I think, you will do
 G O D, and our Church and Nation good
 Service, if you will make it your Endea-
 vour to give the World all the Marks
 of your Respect, of those worthy Ma-
 gistrates and other Gentlemen, and also
 of inferiour Persons, whom you see
 zealous in the Cause of G O D and Re-
 ligion, and excite others to follow their
 Example.

Here you have at large the Thoughts of
 your *Metropolitan* upon this Subject; and
 tho'

tho' you have not the like *public* Testimony from the Lord Arch-Bishop of York, I must tell you, he has more than once declared *his Approbation* of these Societies, and that *none wishes them better than Himself*, and has expressed himself *very ready to serve them effectually*.

The Lord Arch-Bishop of Dublin also, in a Sermon preached before the Lord-Mayor of that City, 1706, declares;

That "all good Men ought

"to be thankful to them; and

"when we find any do rail

"at them, and make it their Business

"to decry them, we have Reason to

"suspect it is *Consciousness of Guilt*, that

"puts them upon doing so, that they are

"afraid of being discover'd, and therefore

"are desirous to extinguish the Light,

"lest it should detect them. ---

"That if they be not encourag-

"ed, the Principles of Honesty

"and Piety will be lost, and such a De-

"luge of Vice will overflow us, as will

"bring down the Judgments of GOD

"upon us, and fill the World with Con-

"fusion. ---- And lastly, that it

"concerns all Men, even in

"point of Interest, (especially

A. Bp. King's
Serm. of the
Mischief of de-
laying Sentence
against an evil
Work. Lond.
Edit. 1707.

p. 19.

p. 21.

p. 22.

“ such as wish well to Virtue and Justice)
 “ to enter into a Society, to oppose and sup-
 “ press the Workers of Iniquity.

The Right Reverend the Bishops, and
 other reverend Dignitaries of the Church
 in *this* Kingdom, in their Sermons preach'd
 to the Societies, to encourage *them* to go on
 with their Design, and *others* to concur with
them in it, tell them, that they are “ Be-

Vid. The
 printed Ser-
 mons of the
 Bishops of
Salisbury,
Chester, Oxford,
Chichester, Glo-
cester, Lincoln,
Litchfield, and
Carlisle; and
 those of Dr.
Stanhope, Dr.
Bray, Dr. Han-
cock, Dr. Wil-
lis, Dr. Butler,
Dr. Bradford,
Dr. Kennet,
 &c. before
 the Societies
 for Reforma-
 tion of Man-
 ners.

“ *nefactors to their Country*;
 “ that the Service they are
 “ employ'd in, is incomparably
 “ *the most noble and highly praise-*
 “ *worthy*, that it was possible
 “ for them to be engaged in;
 “ and that the Persons enga-
 “ ged in that Service, were
 “ themselves *Men of Virtue*,
 “ not chargeable with any of
 “ the Vices which they pre-
 “ tend to suppress, but every
 “ way *fit Persons* to be em-
 “ ploy'd in such a glorious
 “ Undertaking. They ac-
 “ knowledge, that the La-
 “ bours of these worthy Socie-
 “ ties, tend directly to *make the Preaching*
 “ *and Ministry of the Clergy successful*; and
 “ that such as anxiously watch over the
 “ Sculs of their People, will be joyfully
 “ and

“ and gratefully sensible of this Benefit.
 “ They declare, that *firm Alliances* and *strong*
 “ *Confederacies* are *needful* to pull down the
 “ *Empire of Sin and Wickedness*; that it is a
 “ *Mercy of GOD*, that *Men of Honour* and
 “ *Conscience* fall into a happy Understand-
 “ ing, and join *Hearts and Hands* to re-
 “ duce the exorbitant Power of Satan;
 “ that *the divine Wisdom* directs them; that
 “ their *Prudence* and *good Lives* leave no
 “ Room for any *Jealousy* of them in their
 “ *Governours*; that they only raise the
 “ *Envy of the Wicked*, and the *Fury of*
 “ *Hell*; and exhort them not to be afraid,
 “ tho’ their *Adversaries* are numerous and
 “ powerful, the *Prince of the Power of the*
 “ *Air*, with his whole *Retinue of wicked*
 “ *Spirits*, and his *Allies on Earth, profane*
 “ and *vicious Men*; but to remember, that
 “ the *Battle is not theirs*, but *GOD’s, &c.*
 And now, Sir, be pleased to compare
 your own Conduct with that of your Su-
 periors, Civil or Ecclesiastical, and with the
 Sentiments of other Divines, in this Mat-
 ter, who are by no means Inferiour to
 you in a true Zeal for the Church of Eng-
 land, or in their Stations, Characters, and
 Learning. They heartily approve and re-
 commend the Societies in the highest
 Terms imaginable: You injuriously rail
 at, and superciliously condemn them. They
 esteem

esteem the Persons concerned in them as *virtuous* and *worthy Men* : You call them a Pack of *Knaves* and *Hypocrites*. They look upon the *Design* as *Honourable*, and their *Methods* for the promoting of *Virtue* and *Suppression* of *Vice* most proper and likely to be *successful*; and that their *Endeavours* of this kind are a *necessary Christian Duty*: You brand them as *Odious* and *Factionous*, *illegal Inquisitions*, *unwarrantable*, *pragmatical*, *impertinent*; and what not? The impartial World will think you have Reason enough to blush upon such a Comparison; that you have shew'd so little Deference to the Judgments of so many Wise and Good Men, and so little Regard to the Authority of your Metropolitan, and to the Reputation of your Order.

The warmest of your Friends amongst the Clergy, with whom I have talked upon this Subject, generally disapprove the ill Language you have given; and think it so *strange*, so *absurd* a Thing, that a *Divine* of the Church of England should be against the *Societies* for *Reformation of Manners*, that they pretend no other way to excuse you, than by supposing you only level at some *Abuses*, and not at the very *Being*, and the *proper Business* of such *Societies*: But they must pardon me,

me, if I say, the contrary is too apparent. You are against *all* informing of Vice *whatsoever*; for you affirm, that *having admonished or reprov'd our Neighbour, we have wash'd our Hands of the Guilt, and stand acquitted before GOD and our Consciences of all the Obligation we are under not to suffer Sin upon Him.* You are against the *Societies in general*; For you call them *illegal Inquisitions*; and in all your Harangue either against *them*, or against *Informing*, you make no manner of Limitations or Reserves. You make no Allowances for the Goodness of the Design, but very much otherwise; for you say 'tis all *Hypocrisy*; You make no charitable Suppositions of any that may be sincere amongst them, but lay the whole Body of Reformers under the most odious and unjust Imputations; in short, you say all you can to raise a Mutinous MOB against them, and to fill Mens Minds with Prejudices, that may most effectually hinder all the Good they are able to do: And this too in a *Sermon*; at a very publick Audience, an *Affize*; and when you had done, to spread the Malice as far as possible, you *printed* it. For GOD's sake, Sir, and your own, consider the Mischief of such Measures. Consider how you will answer it at the Bar of GOD, when you shall

shall be called to give an Account of your Stewardship. 'Tis thither the Societies appeal, and to that last great Day, when GOD shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel, and make manifest the Counsils of all Hearts; and then shall every Man have Praise of GOD. You shall then be convinced they are no Hypocrites: But I hope you will be convinced before. Enquire impartially of those unprejudiced Men that know them, and have themselves a serious Sense of Religion, (for only such are fit to give Characters in this Case,) and you will soon be of another Mind. And then, Sir, as a solemn Retraction of the Scandal is on all Hands owned to be a Christian Duty; as well as Restitution for other Frauds and Injuries; be pleased to make an Acknowledgement of your better Sentiments in this Matter as publick as your unjust Accusations have been. You must either prove every Article of your Charge upon the Societies by Matter of Fact and Argument, or own in Print, that they deserved not such a Treatment from you: For no Man that is liable to Error and Passion, as all of us are, can be above Repentance. I am,

Reverend Sir, Yours, &c.

F I N I S.



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